

** Paganism and Christianity. **

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A SINGLE sentence will sometimes give a better idea of a book than a bushel of quotations. The following is the opening sentence in the Introduction to Mr. J. A. Farrer's book on *Paganism and Christianity*, the object of which is to show that historical Christianity has been not a gain but a misfortune to the world, and that men "may derive more mental and spiritual profit, higher aspirations for virtue, toleration, and humanity" from Pagan moral writers, than from their leading Christian contemporaries. His opening words are—"If any great classical writers of the ancient world, like Seneca or Cicero, could come to life again, nothing surely would astonish them more than the descriptions they might read in our books of the state of the world when they left it, of its moral depravity, and the absence of all religious ideas." We are not told who the writers are who accuse the ancient world of "an absence of all religious ideas," but let that pass. The point is that if Seneca or Cicero were to come to life again, they would be astonished at the descriptions given in our books of the moral depravity of the world when they left it. Now we

do not know what Seneca or Cicero would say if they came back to the world again, but we do know what they said while they were in it. We quote one single passage from Seneca, which will give his opinion on the subject. It is from his treatise *De Ira* (ii. 8). "All things," he says, "are full of iniquities and vices. More crimes are committed than can be remedied by force. A monstrous contest of wickedness is carried on. Daily the lust of sin increases; daily the sense of shame diminishes. Casting away all regard for what is good and honourable, pleasure runs riot without restraint. Vice no longer hides itself; it stalks forth before all eyes. So public has iniquity become, so mightily does it flame up in all hearts, that innocence is no longer rare; it has ceased to exist." This is Seneca, and the passage speaks for itself. The only fault we have to find with it is that the condemnation is probably too sweeping. There were better elements even in that age than Seneca gives it credit for. But, as against Mr. Farrer, the refutation is complete. *Ex uno disce omnes.*

Psalm xvi. 1-4.

1. A Davidic jewel. Preserve me, O God, for I seek refuge with Thee. 2. I say unto Yahveh: Lord, Thou art the good of [the people that thy prophet calls] thy wedded one [בְּעֵלְתִּי]. 3. To the holy ones who dwell in the land [I therefore also say], They are the noble ones [of whom the saying is true], "In them is all my delight." 4. They increase their own pains, who give the dowry [מִנְהַר] to another [god]; [but] I will not offer their libations of blood, nor take their names upon my lips [Exod. xxiii. 31].

This is the translation of Ps. xvi. 1-4 given by Professor Wildeboer of Gröningen in a recent article in a collection of various essays presented to Professor de Goeje of Leyden on occasion of his professorial jubilee this year (1891). Like

Bæthgen, the writer is convinced that the Psalmist is one of those who were deeply influenced by Isa. xl.-lxvi., and that obscure and presumably corrupt passages may be illustrated or corrected by passages in that great book (if indeed it can possibly be called "book"). But whereas Bæthgen corrects Ps. xvi. 3 by Isa. xlii. 21 (comparing also Isa. lxii. 8-12, lxx. 16-25), Wildeboer takes suggestions from Isa. lxii. 4. Both scholars appeal to the Septuagint. Of course, there is a ready answer to Professor Wildeboer, viz. that his correction is based on a particular view of the reference of the psalm, which he interprets exclusively of the Church-nation. The reader will guess my own criticisms upon this ingenious theory, which certainly deserves laudatory mention in THE EXPOSITORY TIMES. T. K. CHEYNE.